

First Lady Vilsack's Book Club Web Site
Request for Hosting Fees
Presented to Iowa Access Advisory Council
September 14, 2005

Goal: First Lady Christie Vilsack hosts an online reading club for middle school students called "In the Middle". With a membership of nearly 250 students from all over Iowa, it has become a great success. Members choose from a wide selection of youth-oriented books, read the book and then participate in on-line "bulletin board" discussions with their peers. Participants, including the First Lady, post discussion questions for each book and suggest topics related to the book that readers might want to investigate further. Classroom teachers, school librarians and community librarians are encouraged to use the Club to encourage their students and young library patrons to read.

Project Purpose: Encourage and advance literacy and reading among youth in Iowa.

Background: The First Lady's view is that "When it comes to reading and discussing ideas and memories of experiences rekindled by the books, Iowans are indeed a community of book lovers. And we seem to enjoy sharing our thoughts about them over our computers, which I like to think of as the "campfires" of the 21st Century, where we tell our stories and share the experiences that make up our lives."

While originally intended as a summer program, the book club's success has led the First Lady to extend the club for the school year.

Request: This is a request for the Board to approve \$1,500 to cover the costs of hosting this application within ITE for the next year.

Project Funds: The initial application was developed by Iowa Interactive, and hosting costs were absorbed by ITE when it was only intended to be active for the summer. However, with the application now running through the entire school year a source of funding must be secured.

Interested Parties: Parties interested in this project include middle school-age citizens, parents, teachers, school and public librarians.

Some of the Recipients of this Service:
Middle school-age citizens.